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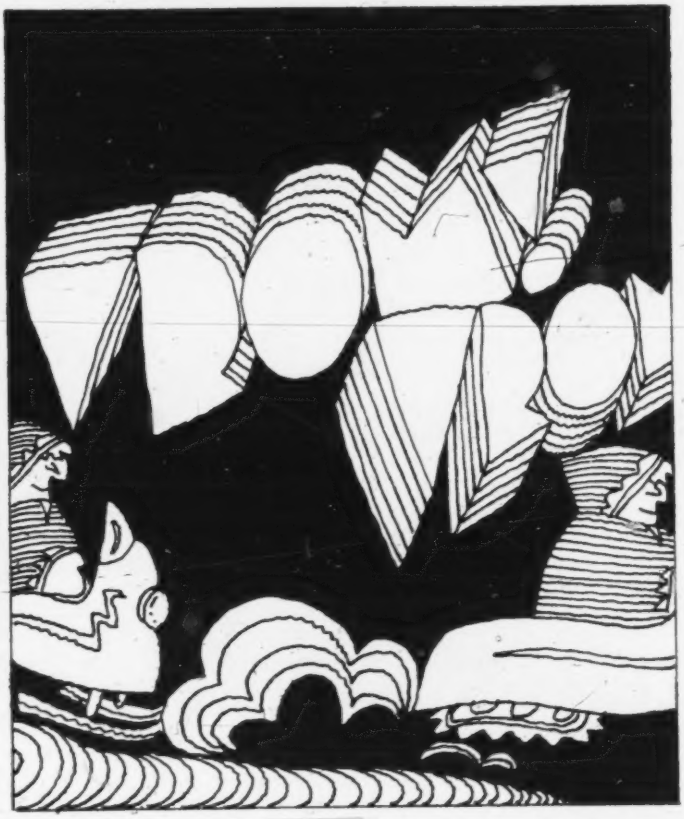
ABSTRACT

This issue of Access, the journal issued periodically by Challenge for Change/Societe Nouvelle, contains two groups of articles. The first focuses upon the Skyriver Project, relating how a project was developed which used film and video tape as a means of helping Alaskan communities to assess their own needs and to advocate for themselves the kinds of changes which they themselves saw as desirable. The second collection is devoted to the project En Tant Que Femmes which dealt with feminist related issues as these were perceived by women working for the National Film Board of Canada. (PB)

Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle Access

National Film Board of Canada

Summer 1973



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Access
Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle
Number 12
Summer 1973

Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle: a program designed to improve communications, create greater understanding, promote new ideas and provoke social change.

Challenge for Change/Société Nouvelle is an experimental program established by the Government of Canada as a participation between the National Film Board of Canada and certain federal government departments and agencies, which now comprise: Agriculture, Communications, CMHC, National Health and Welfare, Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Labour, Manpower and Immigration, Regional Economic Expansion and Secretary of State/Citizenship. The program is responsible directly to the Secretary of State, via the Privy Council office.

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SKYRIVER
An Experiment in Change

DISTRIBUTION RELEASE

Based on the discussions held in the community of Emmonak during the month of January-1971 it is agreed that the film/tape Frank Hamerotf moves into new Home is a fair representation of the opinion(s) held by the people in this community; also based on the discussions held in this community we want thi fil/tape distributed to:

Alaska State Housing Auth — General Public
State Legislature — AVCP
Governor
Housing & Urban Development (HUD)
Other Villages

Louis Francis Council

PRESIDENT, CITY COUNCIL, SKY RIVER FI

I agree that the film in which I appear Film Subject Release Agree
my views and opinions and I will allow the
seen by others.

Jacob A. Johnson

Timothy Williams Jr.

The Skyriver Project

The Story of a Process

Illustration Andre Momplett

Tim Kennedy spent seven years in Alaska with projects funded by the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity.

During that time he developed close personal relationships with villagers, policy-makers and legislators in the Yukon river delta, the state capital and Washington.

These associations give him a vantage point for forming a perspective of the human condition in an Alaskan context. In the following articles he describes the Skyriver project, and makes observations about life in the past and present for Alaska's native people, along with some prospects for the future.

Tim Kennedy has recently joined the Challenge for Change program as a producer. He is welcome.

Basically the Skyriver project uses 16mm film and half-inch video as tools to build community strength. For the past two-and-a-half years, we have attempted to provide access to both video equipment and a professional film crew for Eskimo village people, particularly in the lower Yukon river area of Alaska. Skyriver goes into a community completely open-ended, not being afraid of the ambiguity of the situation that's going to develop.

It Grew Organically

I had already spent two-and-a-half years in the lower Yukon before any video equipment was brought in and the program really grew out of that experience in a kind of organic way, based on my involvement with people in Emmonak. I went there first as an organizer for a fish marketing co-op. People wanted to challenge the Seattle merchants, the Seattle Cannery operation there.

It was a fairly classic kind of exploitation. The people's nets and everything were owned by the company, and they had to get their food from the store owned by the cannery – it was the only place that would give them credit – and then that was deducted from the price paid for their fish at the end of the year. Usually their fish brought a few hundred dollars, and so they would have to get back into credit to hold them over the winter. In the past that worked because, as the manager of the store said, "The people had no other alternative."

Now they've started their own co-operative and they've literally taken over the river. It's a multi-million-dollar business now; they have about 300 fishermen – they've been quite successful.

The Problem Is We Don't Have Any Power

Of course, while I was working with them on getting the co-op group, we also rapped about other things. What they said was similar to what people in Noorvik used to say when I lived up there: The real problem is not the fact that we have poor housing or that we have health problems; the big problem is that we don't have any power, we feel manipulated. We know that we don't really have control over whether a house is going to be built this way or that way, but we don't know how to combat it, we don't know how the hell to have any input.

At the Juneau, Anchorage, Washington level, they don't realize that people understand when they are being manipulated... understand that they don't really have very many choices. They are simply not in a position to do anything about it; they don't have access to information.

Film as Process – The Fogo Experience

In the meantime I met Don Snowden who was the director of the Extension Service at Memorial University in Newfoundland, and he told me about a process of using film, and eventually videotape, that was developed by Colin Low for the Challenge for Change program at the National Film Board. It was a combination of the film-maker and his skills, and the community organizer. They developed this process and it was used quite successfully in Newfoundland.

So everything just fell into place at that point – it seemed right in line with what I'd been thinking about. I had done some experimenting with videotape, but nothing in a very formal way. So, with some help from Don Snowden and Colin Low and others, the Office of Economic Opportunity was persuaded to fund an experiment in the use of media. It wasn't a program that was put together and shipped off as a package to a village. It grew out of the village . . . people talking about different things they'd like to do.

Just People Talking

So the first part of this process is just people talking, and we use half-inch portable video units for the first phase of this, mainly because, unlike films, people can control them immediately. It takes about an hour to learn how to use a video unit; it provides immediate feedback; there's no processing involved. You are screening yourself while the act is still fresh in your memory – as soon as you stop, you can look at yourself. It's also portable, it's battery operated, people can take it any place they want to, out in a fish camp or anywhere else. VTR is used

to build the momentum of community discussions. It's glamorous enough so that everybody in the community comes and screens themselves and screens their relatives. These screenings go on over an extended period of time.

Bring the Factions Together

This is very important because Eskimo communities, just like a community in Anchorage or anyplace else, are not homogeneous groupings of happy people who love each other. There's a lot of factionalism in Emmonak. You have the Black River people, the Tundra people and the Yukon people, and there isn't that much communication among the different groups. So, first of all, it brings these groups together. Also, in a vertical fashion, it brings together the old people and the younger people in the community. Everybody comes to these meetings, and they start reacting to themselves in a very strong way. The image itself forces a safe kind of reaction that face-to-face confrontation wouldn't at that point. Eventually, through these screenings and discussions, the people actually get to the point where they start seeing if there is a consensus on different issues, such as education or housing.

Need to Take the Time

This period of using video to bring the community together and build a consensus on some of the key issues is very important, and it has to be given enough time. The first year we began Skyriver, I had to return two-thirds of our funds to the funding agency, because I refused to rush the process and bring in the filmmakers too soon.

The Village Selects the Organizer

When the time was ripe they selected an individual from the village to act as the organizer on the long haul and do the interviewing in the films.

I think that that's a very important point in our program. In order for the process to really work, the organizer has to be committed in a way that an outsider never can. He has to have a stake in it that only the residents of the community can have. As an outsider I could never have it, however much I could identify intellectually or emotionally with the people. I can feel bad if it doesn't work but I can just go back to Anchorage and forget about it. Raymond Waska, who was selected by the people of Emmonak, can't do that. His relationship to the process will be much more effective than mine, and he has rapidly developed his community development skills.

The Village Selects the Spokesmen

Now at the point when they reach a consensus on a problem, an individual or a group of individuals is selected from the community. These are respected opinion leaders chosen as spokesmen.

Again this contrasts with the "play boss" kind of a thing.* They end up identifying the people in the community they really respect. As example, Frank Kamaroff, who is interviewed in the housing film, is the most powerful individual in the Kamaroff extended family, the most powerful family in the Lower Yukon. But he's not a guy that an official would ever meet, he's not on a Council or anything.

Film Is More Powerful

Up to this point in the process, it's been videotape and discussions. Now a film crew comes in at the request of the community and works under Ray Waska. We use film here mainly because I have found that the film medium is much more powerful when you're dealing outside the immediate community, whether between other communities or with government decision-makers.

*See page 15 column 1

Photograph Tim Kennedy

Before the interview takes place, in order to avoid leading questions or introducing your own bias, the person being interviewed provides a rough sketch of what he wants to say. It's the interviewer's job to bring that out.

Who Controls the Interview?

The interviewee decides where the interview is going to take place, within technical limitations (if there's a big wind or something you have to do it inside.) He decides in what language he's going to do it. He may want to do it in his own language, which a number of people do. So if you're providing an environment, a situation which the person controls, he can communicate in a very comfortable way

. . . unlike a meeting held with government officials.

A Solution Is Offered

Next in the process, the spokesman offers a solution. For the first time a local person offers a solution – and it's expressed on a very powerful medium, film.

Film is good in an organizational sense also, because it takes a couple of weeks after the interview for the film to be processed and the double-system projector brought in for a screening. This gives people time to think over what they have said. If you produce a 15 or 20 minute videotape instead, the tendency is to want to use it right away whether the community's ready or not. Film slows the process down at this crucial point, gives people a chance to think things over.

Who Controls the Viewing?

I'd like to mention here that, after the interview, the person interviewed signs a pre-release agreement. We are very purist about this. The pre-release agreement says that no one else can see the film until he has screened it and edited it and signed his written approval. He screens the uncut footage in private behind closed doors.

Usually the first time a person sees himself on film he's just flabbergasted – "There I am on film!" People in the villages probably see more films than any other group in the world that I know of. It's just incredible . . . they see at the very least a feature film a week. But seeing themselves on film is a shocker.

Who Controls the Editing?

The film is shown to the person concerned a number of times, so that he can get beyond the shock of seeing himself and can start listening to what he's saying. Now, at that point, if there's anything that he wants to delete, it's edited right in front of him. He can actually take the splicer himself if he wants to, and the unwanted footage is just thrown away. Perhaps he has mentioned a politician by name and says, "Oh that's too strong, we'll just cut that out." He'll do it, right then.

Also at that time the film crew is present in case the individual decides to add to his statement. He may say, "Ah nuts, I could have said it much better. I should have added to it." Well he can, at that time. So eventually he puts together a fair representation of his view on the issue.

The Film Generates Discussion in the Village

Once he gets to that point, he signs a written release, which allows it to be seen by other people in the community. The film now includes this new element – a solution has been suggested. The film is then used to provoke discussion and reaction in the community. It goes back to the general community a number of times over a period of weeks.

The screenings are incorporated in the people's lifestyle. The village screening phase is carried out between January and April, which is the time when things slow down and people visit each other. It's not done in summer when people are commercial fishing and fire fighting, or in the fall when they're hunting, or in the late spring when they're getting ready to go fishing again.

Consensus on Solution
The discussions are held by Ray Waska, and they're in their own language. Some of them are videotaped, if they want to document the fact that discussions were held, but eventually the community arrives at a consensus not only on the problem, but on the proposed solution. Shall they agree with what William Trader had to say about education? In this case they did. If they don't agree, the film is thrown away; it is simply rejected because for the purposes of community organization it's meaningless, it's just a minority position in the community.

The Anthropologist's Delight
There is another reason the film has to be released by the community, as well as by the individual on the screen. One delightful old guy wanted to be filmed telling his life story, and the history of the village. So we filmed him, and he was charming, witty, an anthropologist's treasure. He was very pleased with his film, but when it was shown to the community they said, "Oh no, we can't release that – it's lovely story-telling, but it's pure fabrication – it simply isn't true. We can't have a false story of our village being seen." In view of the power of film, the false story would have become the true one in the eyes of history, and the real story would have been forgotten. I wonder how often anthropologists have entered into the annals of history stories built on similar foundations?

The Community Can Add to the Statement
During the community screenings, the community can decide to add to what the original spokesman had to say. While William Trader movingly expressed the community's dislike of far-away boarding schools for their children, and proposed that local or regional high schools be built, a few people wanted to talk about details of curriculum, education content and the kind of teachers they wanted. The film crew shot this, it was brought back to the community, and finally one complementary film was finished representing the community's stand on education.

Information about the Power Structure
They then go into the next aspect of the program, which is that Raymond Waska, with our help, starts providing the community with information that it didn't have access to before. In effect, he starts explaining the system to them. Say you're dealing with the issue of education. Who is the Commissioner of Education? How does he relate to the State Board of Education? How much power do they have? How do they relate to the Legislature, to the Governor, to the Federal people? Over a period of time the system is explained to people, so they then start seeing the places where they can apply pressure so their collective voices can be heard by the right people.

We've introduced a new variable. They can not only write letters, sign petitions and go to regional meetings, but they've got a film now, a consensus film that represents their opinion, and they can take it to the decision-makers.

Can We Solve It Locally?
First of all they decide whether they can solve the problem locally. On an issue like education, they can't afford to build the school or hire a teacher, so they are going to need government assistance, and will have to inform government and ask for a response.

Raymond then takes the film to the Commissioner of Education. The first group it goes to is the civil servants who run the programs and make the decisions that directly affect the particular issue. In this case the two films were shown to both the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education at the same time.

Affecting the Government and Other Villages Too
Now the effect of the films is very hard to describe here; it really has to be observed, but it had a two-fold effect at the education meeting, because there were a number of people from other villages present. They normally go to these meetings and just listen to the State Board of Education. They're traditionally very polite and they don't really say anything because they're intimidated by the trappings of power at the meeting.

Powerful Impact
At this meeting, as I said, there was a two-fold reaction. First the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education were flabbergasted by the film. They had never heard a parent talking at a very practical gut level about how he felt about sending his child out to boarding school. They were used to formal meetings with the so-called native leaders, who were very articulate in the English language and were no longer really village people. They had never really heard from a village person before, so they were really taken aback by it.

The villagers at the meeting saw that reaction. Also, they themselves felt the power of the film, saw its similarity to the way they express themselves in the privacy of their homes, among their own people. So the films gave their feelings and opinions a sense of worth that nothing else could. In the film they saw a guy just like them – he didn't have any more white man's education than they did and a lot of them even knew him personally. And so it freed them to stand up for the very first time and tell these powerful people how they felt. They were literally pushing, jockeying for position to get to the microphone first. There was a huge emotional kind of response from parents, and there were a number of kids there from a high school who felt very strongly in favor of the film's ideas too. For the first time bureaucrats were handed information they could not get on their own. The film then went to the state legislators, the people who provide monies to the Board of Education. They too, were very much influenced by it... and they responded quite positively, again because it provided information they hadn't had access to before.

Another reason for using film is that it involves an environmental change for the bureaucrat. You don't just put a video monitor on his desk, or in a Board Room, where the guy's still taking phone calls and can leave the lights on. Film involves an environmental change; the man usually

Illustration André Monpetit

Photograph Phil Smith

Photograph Richard Pope

has to go to a special screening room that is large enough to project the image, so he steps away from his trappings of power; the lights have to be turned out, and he has to pay much more attention to film than he does to the video image.

The Government People Respond on Video

Another thing that's different about this program: We don't just scree.. a documentary and then the audi...ce just gets up and walks away, saying, "Gee, we must try to do something about it." Raymond brings a video rover with him when he goes to Juneau, and usually somebody to run the camera. He then asks the Commissioner or the State Board of Education or the Legislators to respond directly to the people on videotape. Because of video's speed and immediacy you can get the message back to the people quickly. Many of the people in power have done this. Most of them respond through action, but even before the action starts taking place and becomes visible to the people, the psychological effect of having someone like the Commissioner of Education – recognized as a powerful man – responding directly to them on videotape is very powerful. It does an awful lot to build confidence in the community. That is a very important part of our process which is different from the traditional use of film.

We Got Positive Results

The effect of the education film was that the State Department of Education changed its policy. At that point they were going to use the money to build urban dormitories to beef up their boarding-school program in Anchorage and Fairbanks. That was their idea of bringing the kids closer to home – from Oklahoma back to Anchorage. What the parents were talking about was not a regional high school, even in Bethel or Nome, but a regional high school in Emmonak or in Noorvik-small schools for a small number of villages. This new regional concept was accepted. They are now in the process of designing and constructing the schools. Emmonak now has a high school teacher and other villages are going to get one. The village of Emmonak has filed a suit through Alaska Legal Services Corporation, on behalf o.

all native communities in Alaska, to essentially change the whole regional high school approach in the State of Alaska. The suit claims racial discrimination. Research showed that every remote community that is 50 per cent Caucasian, with eight or more children eligible, has a high school or close access. The contrary is true for native communities. The suit is intended to prevent the Board of Education from changing back its policies in the future.

It has been a very powerful thing. The film has been shown in many other villages that feel exactly the same way. They have responded in kind, they have let their feelings be known, and it's the very first time that that kind of pressure has ever been applied from rural Alaska. The only lobbying, so to speak, that had been done in Alaska was from Fairbanks or Juneau, where people know how to use the system. The film has been a very powerful tool – education has become probably the biggest issue to surface in the villages.

In every single case, except for the housing program below, the response to our process has been most positive. Governments have been shocked at the way their system has been set up. They had really believed they were doing a good job. Most of their information had come from uninformed field workers; it was internal, in-house – they never really had access to community opinion.

Housing – A Long, Tough Fight

The case with a rural housing program was a long, tough, two-and-a-half-year process. The film showed the incredibly bad design of the low-income houses, with people freezing and miserable. The first response from the government program was to try to co-opt people. They responded on tape with a lot of soothing bureaucratic language. "It's not really as bad as you think it is. You are the only village with a problem, you really screwed it up." But they underestimated how far the people would go. There was a consensus among the people: "We don't accept that." They sent the film to other villages and got support on videotape.

Eventually the housing authority had to respond. Now, very quietly they are trying to get around $500,000 to rebuild those houses.

But that two-and-a-half years was a long, rough process. It even involved a physical threat to me. That was when it was really obvious to me that the film process was powerful. The education issue went so well, at first I was worried. I never expected things to happen so fast in such a positive way.

The housing response was more the kind of reaction I was told to expect. Their position was, "We don't recognize the problem. It doesn't exist. You guys are making it up. You've taken one house out of one village and blown the whole thing out of proportion. Everyone else loves the houses." In the past people would have had to accept that. Right away the housing program introduced a big huge study on it, "a study of your village".

But now the people had their film, which they hadn't had in the past. For instance, in one house, children ice skated in the kitchen. That is how obscene the whole damn thing was. People could keep their meat frozen solid inside the house, just by putting it in the corner.

It Wasn't a Case of Malicious Mischief

Just bad design. People designing the homes have no stake in whether the homes are good or bad. They don't really pay the penalties if the homes aren't good.

Most housing programs are mainly concerned with housing developments that are *not* rural, low-income. Middle-class housing developments are their main interest. But there was a lot of money available for low-income housing. The agency wanted a lot of people to be hired at the Anchorage, Juneau, and Washington, DC, levels as a result of these programs. They finally told the village people, "Look, we couldn't care less. We got stuck with this low-income housing project." They just tried to do it for a minimal amount of hassle. There were guys in there, trying to do a good job, who were totally ignorant of permafrost.

The Villages Reacted

As long as they didn't get any pressure they couldn't have cared less. But they got pressure. The film was sent to villages all over Alaska, and their discussions were videotaped. They showed complete consensus on the bad quality of the housing. Reaction started coming from all directions, in spite of threats and intimidation.

Photograph Clark Mishler

Illustration Andre Momotiuk

Eventually it got to the point where some of the more responsible guys in the housing program started saying, "Why can't we admit that we blew it?" Eventually they were heard. They had enough nerve to talk to their superiors. And the film helped to free them to say it. The evidence was so overwhelming that it freed them internally to say, "Hey, look, we have got to respond to this. We've got to take some action." When the housing officials screened the videotapes from the villages, the one man who was obstructing changes was fired, and policies were changed.

Skyriver is not only concerned with problem films. The villagers also make positive films, showing the accomplishments of the community. They also make films that reflect the culture, history and lifestyles of the people. Many of these are in color, as the people believe these elements of their lives deserve nothing less than the best color film. These films have had another effect. The young people, who had been drawn forcefully into the changes of lifestyles created by the white influences, had been getting farther and farther from their cultural roots. Screenings of the films have generated intense discussions between the old people and the young, culminating in the renewal of the old tradition of instructing younger people in the Kuzigik (Eskimo meeting house) by the old people themselves. The last generation of Eskimos who lived here before the whites ever came is dying now. The young people are asking them to pass the culture on.

The Whites Phase Out

The last step in the whole process is now being completed. Two Eskimo artists, Andrew and Louis Chikoyak, have been trained as cameraman-director and soundman, and with Raymond Waska, will continue the project on their own. They will work not just in the Emmonak area but also at Tununak, their Nelson Island home town, where they are setting up the Skyriver facilities.

A Native Film Crew Takes Over

Andrew Chikoyak initially learned art and film-making at the Institute for American Indian Arts at Santa Fe, New Mexico, and for the last year has been working with Phil Cook at putting his very considerable artistic skills to work with his sense of commitment to helping his people use film as a social tool.

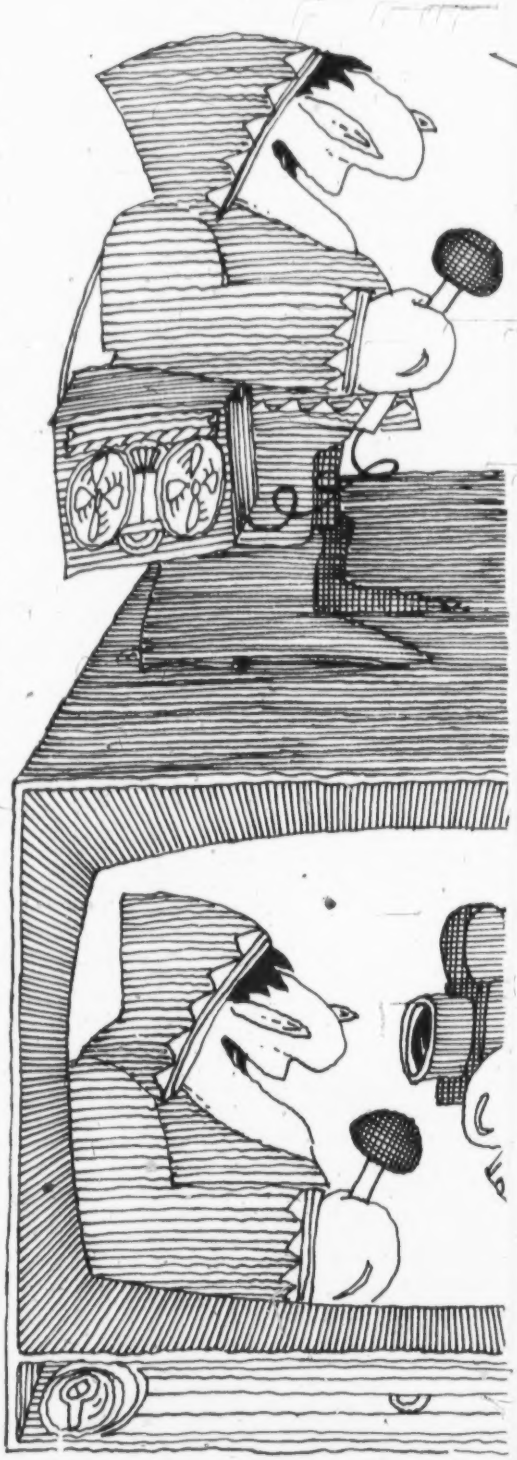
In Kotzebue, the Northwest Alaska Native Association will use Skyriver tools to provide and obtain information for the native land claims settlement. The villagers will have access to each other in a way never available before.

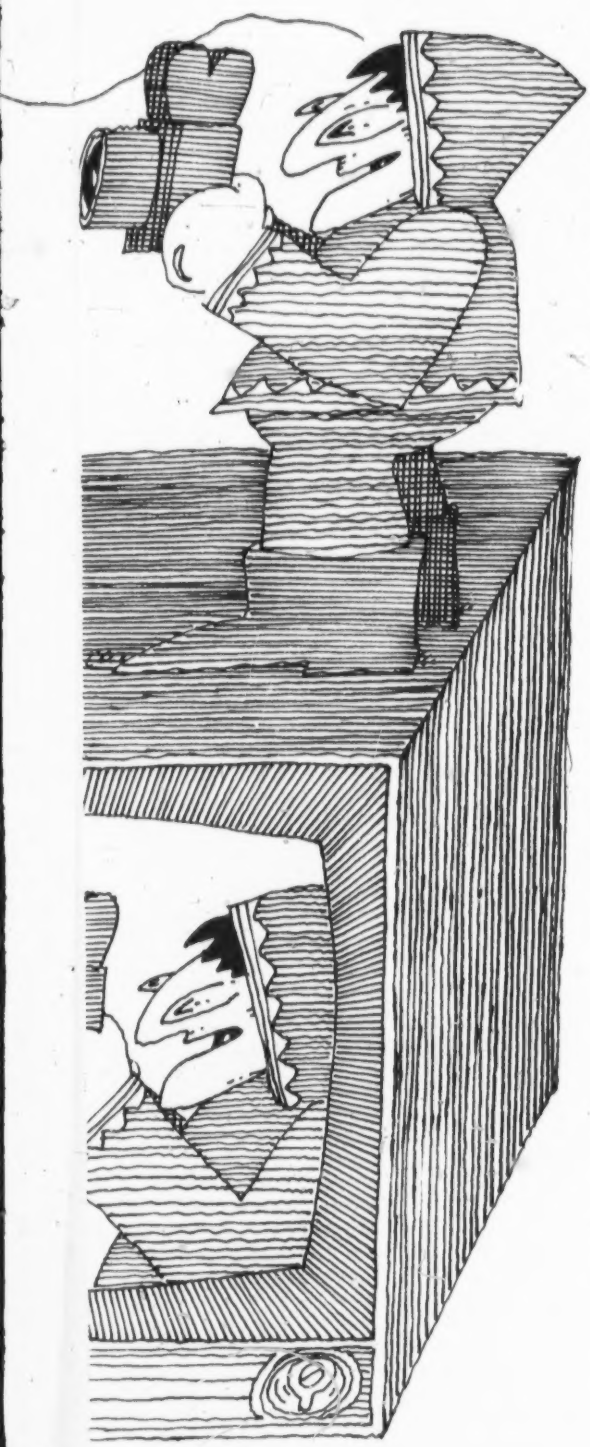
I believe the native film crew, being more sensitive to the ways of the Eskimo, will experience even greater success. Already, they have got material a white crew could never get.

As of April 30, 1973, Skyriver will be entirely run by Andrew and Louis Chikoyak, and Raymond Waska. The village of Emmonak has its own video equipment and will buy tapes.

We have been trying to diversify the funding for the future. OEO has been phased out, but we intended to find alternate funding in any case. Already the Tununak experience will be partially paid for with a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts. More is needed.

Tim Kennedy





In Anticipation of Problems

I feel it is important to anticipate a special phenomenon while training a local person. When a local individual is trained by a professional or an expert (particularly if he is from another culture), the organizer-trainee risks changing his reference group from his community to the person he has been trained by, or from whom he is getting his cheque. When he needs advice or when he wants to be rewarded, the rewards or punishments that he relates to aren't from the community.

Now this is something I did my best to prevent. Raymond Waska has had fairly good success in this regard, even to the point where for months at a time I don't know where Raymond is, and he doesn't feel obligated to let me know what he's doing all the time.

It Takes a Certain Kind of Film-maker
Another thing to be aware of, if you're going to use the film medium, is to be extremely careful about who you hire as a film-maker. The first person that I had in our project was probably the most severe problem that I had to contend with throughout the whole development of the program. First of all he was incompetent as a film-maker, but over and above that he had the traditional attitude that the product was all-important, that it was an extension of himself. He was the creative person who would interpret. He couldn't accept the fact that he couldn't control the editing process and the distribution. In a sense he related to me as if I were a client, and he related to the people in the village that way. So, after a long, rather uncomfortable period of time, I eventually had to let him go and found a very sensitive young film-maker, who has also trained the Eskimo crew.

The film-maker has to give more than any other person in a Skyriver project. It's the way film is used as a tool. It's really quite a dramatic interpreter. The product is only important as a means to an end. We're not worried about mass distribution of the films. They have a very specific activist kind of role within the process. It's very difficult for a film-maker to accept that. He has to subjugate himself to quite a degree.

An Innate Conflict Between Film-maker and Community Developer
So it's very important that you get the kind of person who can talk these things out and argue with others without negative consequences.
I'm very fortunate to have had Phil Cook, who is a young film-maker. His sensitivity and his willingness to subjugate his training and his concept of film-making have been a very important asset.

What about Broader Distribution?
Another problem, I thought, was how to use the film when it had been screened to government officials and others, and had gone to other villages to get their support.

It has been well utilized but I really underestimated the importance of film as an information resource for urban Alaskans, for use in universities and for cross-cultural courses and educational courses. We got a tremendous demand for the films, and yet we never really set up a distribution system and have never really known quite how to handle it. I think that 's something that everyone is going to run into and it should be anticipated more than I did from the beginning. If anyone has any solutions to that, I'd really like to hear them.

It's Not a Blueprint
Let me just say that Skyriver is a process that has been utilized very successfully in rural Alaska. I want to share the experience with other people but I think it would be a tragic misinterpretation of the Skyriver experience, if it is related to as a model or formula – effective for whatever environment you're working in. The best advice I can give is that you accept the ambiguity of your situation and not succumb to an ideology that will seem to free you from it.

Pity, Sympathy and Empathy

Much more important, I feel, than the technical details of when to use videotape and at what point in the process you introduce film, is the attitude of the community organizer, particularly a person who is not a member of the community but who is an outside resource person involved with the community.

First of all, I do not believe an organizer should step into undertaking a program. The organizer should only be involved with a community that has made a specific request for his or her assistance. It is one thing to make communities aware that you're available and what you can do, and it's another thing to impose yourself on a community.

But I feel the larger issue here is the attitude of the organizer. That is going to leave the greatest imprint on a community. It is going to affect the day-to-day relationship that the organizer has with the community.

I feel the best way to relate to this is to discuss the differences between pity, sympathy and empathy.

The essential difference between empathy and the other two reactions is that someone empathetic is willing to become involved with the other person, not trying to involve the other person with him or her. Without that kind of involvement there can never be commitment. And there must be that kind of commitment for anyone to really be of benefit to others.

Pity

How is this manifested in real situations? Well, for example, I've been to a number of meetings with government agency representatives. One frequently hears how terrible it is to be an Eskimo, what terrible living conditions they have to live under, how poor their health is, how many of them die too early in life; it's one thing after another. Just talking about how devastating these people's lives are, and that's it. At the end of the meeting people get up and they walk away. There's no involvement there at all. That's pity. And if you appeal to people at that level you're going to appeal to their worst instincts. The relationship is going to be based on pity and no one benefits from that.

Sympathy

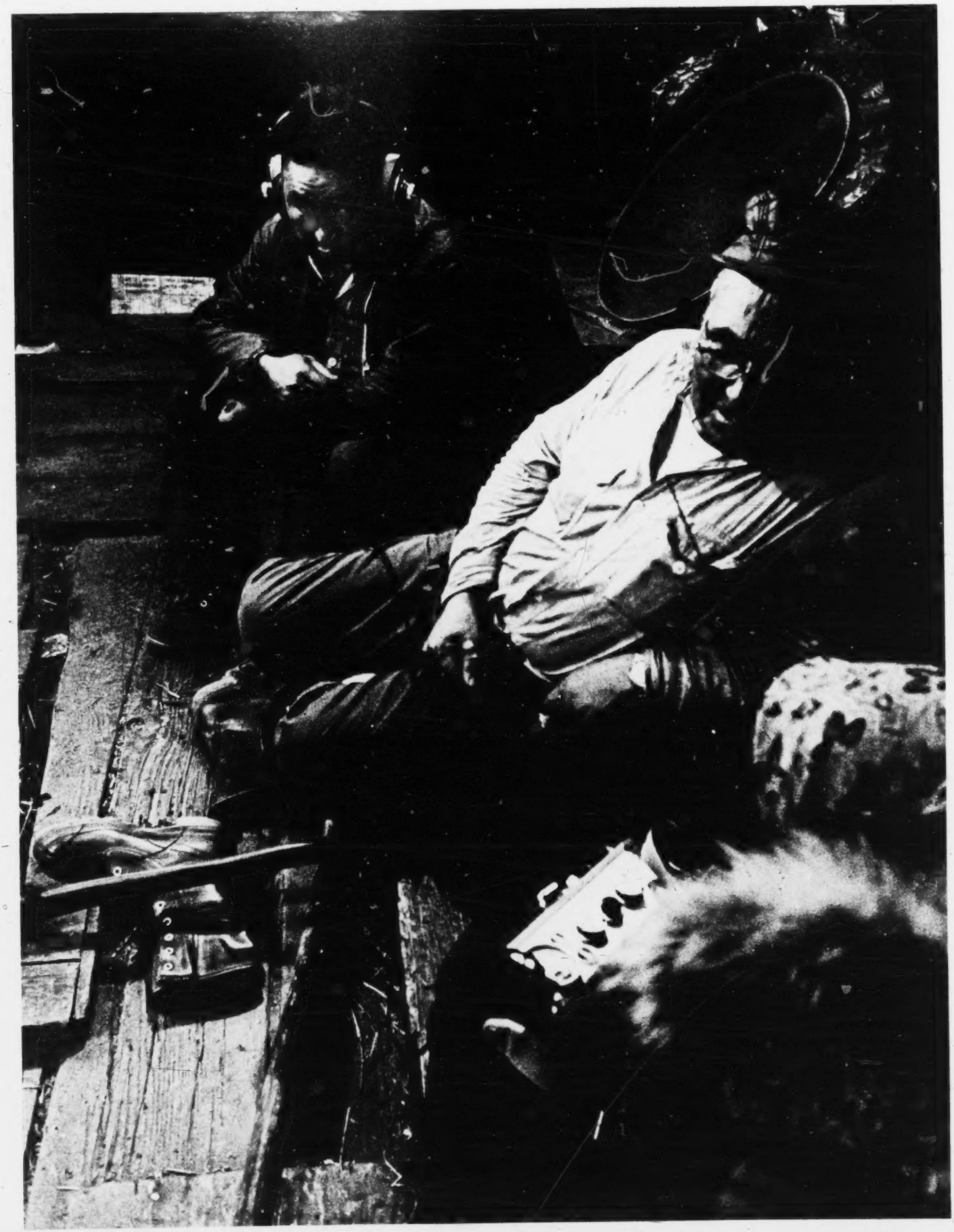
A manifestation of sympathy that I've seen quite a bit, particularly in a cross-cultural situation, is white people working with Eskimos and feeling that the greatest contribution would be to take these people out of their dismal situation and bring them to a city for a couple of weeks on a tour, or take school children from an Eskimo village to a school in another city, in a place like Oregon or whatever – no involvement there either.

If anything, that's a slap in the face to people. For the first time these children realize what they don't have; needs are created but there is no corresponding means provided to attain them. And it may be totally irrelevant to the reality of the person's environment.

Empathy

Now the third thing, empathy. I feel the process that we have developed in Skyriver, and what is happening in Challenge for Change, are good examples of empathy because it takes involvement. It takes commitment which has to be done on the people's terms. It has to be open-ended and the people must have complete control over it.

The organizer within this process cannot be an active advocate for any position. The organizer must be reactive. He must only respond to the community at the community's request and become involved with the community on its terms, so that he or she develops the credentials that the community respects. In a sense the organizer must pay his dues. He must be judged on the people's terms to develop the kind of trust that's needed.



When Western Society Came to Alaska

When the whites first came to Alaska, they came here to exploit. They came here to exploit the natural resources mainly, the non-renewable resources, but they also felt obligated to impose the western institutions – religious, social, educational, economic – supposedly to benefit the Eskimo, Indian, Aleut people. So the poverty of native Alaskans is the poverty of exploitation that has become both cause and effect of present problems.

They Controlled the Information Flow
The one variable that allowed all this to happen is the fact that the white men controlled the information flow. They imposed a system that was totally divorced from the reality of village life.

In fact, villages were not even the reality at that time. People were highly mobile, particularly the nomadic northern people, who travelled long distances every year. When the religious and educational institutions were set up in rural Alaska, they brought people into permanent settlements for the very first time. So you destroy the traditional way that people shared information. You keep them apart. You immobilize them, while on the other hand bringing them together in an alien life style of a permanent settlement with numerous extended-family loyalties conflicting with one another. It has a devastating effect.

New Symbol of Expression
But probably the most devastating thing was the introduction of text books in the schools and the Bible in Christian churches. Not only did that allow for control over content and control over who had access to it, but the final blow was that it *introduced a completely new symbol for expressing oneself, to people who had an oral tradition.*

People had developed an oral tradition which included the dance and story telling, the story knife. These nomadic people came together once or twice a year to share their stories and experiences. Certain individuals would be entrusted to memorize them and they would carry it on, so in a sense the dance was a history book.

The native students in 1972 up here who are going to the university are still having problems bridging the oral and written traditions.

They are very intelligent, bright, sharp kids who can't cope with writing.

No More Get-togethers
The next effect of developing permanent settlements was that people didn't have a chance to get together to share with other groups, other extended families, about what was going on from year to year. The only way you could communicate with somebody who was 400 miles away, was through the US mail, again further legitimizing the written word.

Radio – The Unfulfilling Possibility
The next development, in terms of media communications devices, was the radio. Now you could assume that they would be of benefit to Eskimos, who have a verbal tradition. *But control is still maintained by government regulations.*

In most of the villages in Alaska, there's a radiophone. But it's in the Bureau of Indian Affairs or the state-operated school, and the only person bonded to use it is the principal/teacher. I'll give you an example. When I lived in an Arctic Eskimo village, they had an emergency situation that arose because of something the principal/teacher was doing. The people didn't like it. They wanted him out fast. Now the only guy who could operate the radio was the very same principal/teacher. They had to get permission from him in order to blow the whistle on him, and he wasn't about to let them.

Television – We're Hypnotised but Intimidated
Now we have television, which has forced a crisis of sorts in our western society. Because of our agricultural/industrial experience we have legitimized the written word. All our institutions relate to that legitimacy. When you bring in the visual image, it forces our society to do a lot of unlearning, to be able to use it, to be able to trust it. A manifestation of that is the fact that not one publishing house in any western industrial country is regulated by government, but every single institution that projects a visual image on a public screen is very strictly regulated by government.

To the Eskimo It's Just an Electronic Story Knife
So the sophisticated technological society has developed this great thing that we're intimidated by. But it is nothing more than an electronic extension of the traditional way that Eskimo people communicated. It's nothing more than an electronic story knife. So it's a tool that they feel comfortable using.

It is also a tool that has mystique, that represents power to decision-makers in Juneau, Washington, DC, and Anchorage, who are from the western culture. If anything they're in awe of the medium.

That makes film and video natural and very useful to help Eskimo people focus in on issues, develop a sense of collective power, a power they don't have as individuals but which they can feel as a group. They can also be used to provide direct communication between village people and government decision-makers who make decisions affecting their lives.

Local Government Was Imposed
The village council is supposed to represent the community. The city council was a western concept of local government. It was imposed, not for the benefit of the people, who were forced into a permanent village situation. The village and councils were instructed so that the government officials would have something they could relate to. And they were expected to use Robert's Rules of Order.

The Death of the Shaman
This was set up to replace the traditional power structure, in which the Shaman was the most powerful figure. He was the spiritual leader and the political leader. He was discredited, driven underground, not so much by the strength of Christian belief *but by the white man's disease.* Influenza and other diseases ran rampant throughout the villages, killing thousands of people. And the Shaman could not handle them, had no way to cure the people. But most of the missionaries were, as it happened, medical missionaries and

they were around with a serum, curing people. They displayed an awesome power that probably did more to discredit the Shaman than anything else.

Who Wants to Play Boss?
What are the negative effects of that? Well as an example, the Yupik Eskimo word for city council president is "Ongayukahuk" which literally translated into English means "play boss". Now I was brought up in a western society. I was taught to respect the office of president or teacher, respect for the office itself. That is not true in the native tradition at all. They respect the man.

So people take turns playing boss for the white man. Now, the individual who's playing boss may be a leader or he may not be. But from my experience most of the real leaders, who are respected in the traditional sense, didn't really want to bother with that. They almost felt fortunate to let other people sit on the city councils because they acted as a kind of buffer for the community. The outsiders would seek out the people in the community who had credentials they could relate to – mayor, president or whatever And so they acted as a buffer for years.

But more and more now, village people are starting to see that this has reached the point of diminishing returns. They've got to start getting the right people on these councils. However, a lingering consequence of this imposed local institution is that many ineffectual villagers used this system to promote themselves through a government/church patronage which eventually provided for an artificial leadership structure. These villagers gained access to information and used it at the village level to their advantage.

The Self-fulfilling Prophecy
The other thing that has had a strong effect here is a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. The government officials have this mythological belief that Eskimos are childlike, passive, lethargic, fatalistic, that they have a tremendous sense of humor, etc. Now that's a romantic kind of reverse racism in a sense. (Blacks are wonderful musicians.) I mean, there's no real middle ground for the way most whites deal with Eskimos. They're either put up on a pedestal at a very romantic kind of "noble savage" level or they're considered second-class citizens. "Culturally deprived" is an expression used a lot, rather than thinking of them as having a *different* culture.

Wham Bam Thank You Ma'm
So the outsider comes in. He brings his environment with him. He comes in using a private plane, with all the trappings of power. If he does hold meetings, he holds meetings on his terms. He only seeks out the people with the western credentials in the villages. He has a short two-hour visit, usually. Very few ever stay overnight, and if they do, they stay in the Western compound in the village. So the people are put in a situation where they live up to the guy's expectations. They act passive. They don't really have the time to go beyond that level with him.

No Time to Check with the Leadership
He represents a lot of power, and people usually attribute more power to him than he has. Now, couple that with the fact that most of the people he's talking to, if not all of them, have no right to represent their community in the traditional sense. They have to check the true leadership before they can respond on behalf of the community, and if the guy's only there for an hour, two hours, they do not have the time to do that. So there's another reason for acting passive. And so the prophecy is again fulfilled.

Chaos of Misinformation
What you have as a result of the system is not just a lack of information, which is what a lot of people talk about in the States. I think it's much more complex than that. I think that as a result of the system you have a chaos of misinformation, half-truths, innuendo, rumors, fostered by the two-hour visit and the bureaucratic language that never really gets deciphered. The village people have to make decisions based on undecipherable data, and the public official has to make decisions based on this system of misinformation.

The Bureaucratic Snowball
You have this incredible snowball effect that has been built up over the years. People initiate programs, not for the benefit of the village people, but to fill the needs of bureaucrats in Anchorage, Juneau and Washington, DC.

Someone decides on a program, convinced it's going to fill the needs of people, according to the feed-back that he's gotten, which is misinformation. So there's an internal fight within an agency over the program – let's say a housing program. They make all the compromises at the Washington, Anchorage, Juneau level, after a lot of fighting internally within the agency, and eventually they come up with a package that's satisfactory to them.

Do You Want A, B or C?
Up to this point, they have not involved the people who will live in these houses. Eventually there is a blueprint, a basic prototype or design. At that point they involve the village people. Someone goes out with a blueprint and says this was developed by experts over a period of years – but you also have the right to make suggestions for change. Now, the man lays out his credentials for them as an expert. The people are intimidated; it's difficult for them to suggest that maybe those houses aren't relevant, that they'll probably blow over in a couple of months, because the experts didn't understand permafrost or something. And when they do, they aren't heard.

They aren't really given any alternatives, although they may get a choice between blueprints A, B and C. The expert says, "This is the choice, this is what people request." So the government officials say, "This is what the people asked for." Of course they asked for it! It was the only option that they were made aware of. This happens time and time again!

Cosmetic Surgery on the Body Politic
Most of the programs that exist right now, I feel, are just cosmetic applications. All that they're doing is making people a little more comfortable in their poverty. It's like cosmetic surgery... a person gets a new nose or a face lift but she's still 65 years old... and there's no if's, and's or but's about that.

So you've got the cultural problem of people who usually have a consensus way of making a decision – a kind of an eastern way of making a decision – dealing with officials accustomed to making decisions differently.

It's Not Cowboys and Indians

If you're going to bridge that gap there has to be an exchange. You can't relate it to good guys or bad guys. You have to look at it as a system that's evolved, which is not working, and everyone who takes part in it is a victim. You have to look at it in the classic tragic sense. The bureaucrat who goes out there and honestly feels he's doing a good job is just as much a victim as the villager who has to pay the penalty for a wrong decision.

One Step Further than Feed-back

Now what kind of process can be used to really bridge the gap? That's what Skyriver has been working on.

Of course we are trying to take it one step further. Our aim is not just that government officials will be able to use the program to get feed-back on decisions they have come up with. It is starting out open-ended from the community level so that, eventually, they can gain enough momentum to put the government officials in a position of responding to them, and carrying out the decisions of the community.

We Value Different Things

After I was in Noorvik for a short while, I started hanging around a man with whom I felt the most comfortable. He spoke English better than anyone else. He had been in the lower 48 (states) quite a bit.

One night when my wife and I were visiting, he was showing me a number of gifts that people had given him. One of the gifts was a huge trophy about two-and-a-half feet high, a large gold-plated loving cup, and it said, "First place North American Dog Sled Championship", which is like the world series in Alaska. It's a very prestigious dog race and it said, "Stephen Sampson, 1959". Now Steve was the first Eskimo ever to enter the North American and the first Eskimo ever to win it. And he had given my new friend his trophy. With my own values in mind, I was thinking of all the reasons why that was such an important gift. What it symbolized – achievement, first place, the fact that it was gold-plated – the whole thing.

For some reason I asked the man why it was an important gift to him. And he responded by saying, "Well you see those handles, I'm going to hack-saw them off and file them down and they'll make the best shee fish hooks you ever saw. I'll be able to use them and pass them on to my son and he'll be able to pass them on to his kids and they'll last for a very, very long time." I was completely flabbergasted. About a week later I went back to visit him and the trophy itself was in the garbage and he was filing down the handles. He had never even looked at the inscription.

And then I asked the man who had given him the trophy why he had given it to him. He said," Oh, you saw those handles? He could hack-saw them off."

I've never forgotten that incident. I feel it really resulted in a significant change in my attitude.

Shortly after the trophy incident a couple from Kotzebue were visiting my wife and me, and they noticed a picture, a little happy snap, on the wall of our house. It was a picture of a friend of mine and his little baby girl – a dark-haired chubby little kid with jam on her face. When they asked me who the baby was, I started talking about her father who was one of the first draft resistors, in the early 60's.

He had quite a rough time, had to leave school, had a hard time getting employment. I went on and on about how poor this guy was and how rough he was having it. When I finally finished the woman responded by saying, "Gee, after seeing the picture of their baby I'd think they were rich." "What do you mean by that?" I asked. She said, "Well, if they can afford to waste that much jam."

What Is Sexy This Year?

Nobody who makes a decision in Juneau and Anchorage ever really responds to the needs of the people. The big thing is, "Hey, what's sexy this year?" Housing is sexy. The sexy thing now is Indian alcoholics. That is based on the fact that alcoholism is sexy in Washington, DC, where they get their money from.

The alcoholism programs being developed now are based on a study that was done in the south-western area by a professional research organization. Here, for the first time anywhere, a large group of people admitted they were alcoholics. The researchers flipped out. They had got a group that they could experiment on and do things with. Forty-two per cent of the people, in an open-ended question, said that alcoholism was the number one problem. Well of course the government responded to that by coming out with a program for all kinds of millions of dollars for alcoholism.

I know most of the people and most of the villages where the study was taken, and I talked to a lot of people about it. And most of those people didn't know what alcoholism was or what an alcoholic was. To them it just meant anybody who took a drink, or somebody in the village who got drunk last week.

There are very few alcoholics in the small villages. Most of them are actually whites who are up there. I am not just saying that, but they are mostly teachers and others who live in compounds separate from the villages and get cabin fever. I know some who can't go a day without booze.

But the Eskimo people are mainly binge drinkers. There has not been a social sanction with controls developed around drinking. So they are uninhibited drinkers. They can go six, seven months without booze. And when they get money, then they get drunk in a kind of uninhibited way. So they are very visible drunks.

But it is not alcoholism in the sense that the bureaucrats are now considering it to be. They are going to pour money into it, and then people are going to say, "Yeah, we're alcoholics" because they get money if they say it, and there you go – the whole self-fulfilling prophecy again. Then about twenty people in Anchorage get nice fat jobs and most of them think that they are really helping out.

Some Advice from a Native Film Crew to the People of Alaska

The following was sent to Tim Kennedy, to be published if he felt it might be useful to other groups.

With regard to motion picture and videotape, there are some facts to be aware of, which have both hurt and helped our native way of living. Many of us were threatened upon the rise of the Sea Mammal Act. Believe it or not, this Act was the result of a movie made up north, in which some unheard-of brutal ways of killing the seal were used! The Act first became an issue soon after the movie was nationally televised. The nation's impression from this movie was that we, the native people of Alaska, also utilize this unimaginable way of killing the seal! So, there came the protests across the nation, people demanding that any kind of seal killing be stopped, an issue which we all put up a hard fight against. This is one fact that we all need to bear in mind as of now.

Prior to the approval of taping or filming by outsiders in your community it is very important that you know: who they are, what organization they represent, what the purpose of the taping or filming is, in what way the tape or film is going to be used, what accommodation they'll need and for how long, and whether or not a guide or consultant is going to be needed.

The language consulting is hard work, especially when it comes to translation of Eskimo to English while editing the film. This is why the language consultant should ask to be paid generously.

Also, it's a good idea to look into a way of getting a positive confirmation on all the information that you have requested. All these may seem too much information to ask for, but they are our security from future possible government attacks on our native way of Alaskan rural living.

Andrew and Louis Chikoyak

Land Claims– An Explosive Issue

In rural Alaska something is happening since the land claims settlement was finally signed into law. The first explosive reaction was seen in Galena.* A white hunter landed in a small plane. He came up on the beach, and most of the adults in Galena were waiting for him with rifles. They said, "You cannot hunt here, white man. You are white and you cannot hunt here anymore." And the guy said, "Ah, for crying out loud, get off that," and took no notice. And they responded by cutting the rope on his plane and shooting holes in the floats, and the plane almost sank.

Now that could never have happened five years ago, two years ago.

Totally Unheard Of

That news has spread through rural Alaska like wildfire. It is the first indication of what the ingredients are if the land claims aren't settled properly.

And the land claims issue is turning village against village in a subtle way. I think you are going to see another explosiveness here. You are going to see Eskimos and Indians attacking white people instead of responding implosively by attacking each other. They're under incredible pressure.

Divide and Conquer

This idea of divide and conquer. Each village in a region is required to have an incorporated entity. So each village has to incorporate itself and then the regional corporation, which it has to belong to, has to incorporate as a legal entity. Very few people understand. The village gets so much land around its present site but it doesn't get the sub-surface rights to it. The regional corporation does.

So let's look at a situation that could arise. A village has oil, but it says, "We don't want to exploit. We don't want to ruin what we have, even though there is money involved in it. We know that fifteen miles away there are oil deposits as big as the one we are sitting on. We don't want to move our village." But the sub-surface rights belong to a regional corporation that has 13 villages. They only have one vote out of 13 to decide what to do. The 12 other villages may decide to erect an oil well in that village and sub-surface rights take precedence over surface rights. They can't stop them from doing it. So you can really imagine people in that village, feeling other villages are turning against them. And they'll start fighting amongst themselves.

Who Owned Waterways?

The other thing is that people are finding out now for the very first time that all navigable waterways in Alaska have always been owned by the State. For example, a village is located by a huge lake. The people of the village have been hunting and fishing there from time immemorial. They found out a couple of months ago that it is not their lake. It has always been owned by the State of Alaska, even in territorial days. There has been a terrific negative reaction to that.

60 per cent Glacier

The Chugiach Native Association just found out after the settlement that 60 per cent of the land that they can withdraw is glacier. They are a little upset. I really believe you have the ingredients for a very explosive situation here.

Native People Aren't Kids

The American people are going to have to start realizing that Eskimos aren't kids – they are grown men and women – and start realizing just how much that land means to them. They are perfectly willing to fight for it if it gets down to it, including mobilizing the National Guard and everything else, as has been discussed in a number of villages.

That information has to get out so the people can see the seriousness of this. For instance, the Land Use Planning Commission, people like that, are totally unaware of this. They are just going to go out, excited about going out into the villages to talk to these people – to these nice people who have a sense of humor – harpoons, skinboats and all this kind of thing. Kind of a glamor trip. And they are going to be in for a rude awakening.

But a lot of it won't surface until the people really start seeing the land claim is not working the way they thought it would. And it's geared not to.

It's Geared Not to Work

Most of the Senators and Congressmen who helped write that bill, with all its compromises, are from the western states and they know that the Indian groups in their states are watching very carefully. If this works, the Indians are going to go the legislative route. Up to now, they've all gone through the Indian court claims, which is a legal route. Most of them got very bad deals out of it. This is the first group that's gone the legislative route, through the political process, applying pressure and having specific laws passed in the legislature. All the Indian groups are watching this very carefully and if it works they are going to start over and go the legislative route. And the politicians don't want that to happen. So they have very skilfully written this Bill – the most complex Bill that's ever been passed by the US Congress. Even lawyers don't understand it – they admit it. The terminology is just incredible.

The Burden Is on the Regions

And now the burden is on the regional corporations to decipher it and make it work – to fulfill the requirements. A new elite has been established, modelled on other western institutions, and it's making the same mistakes, for the most part. They have three years to do this thing, two years to do another. If they don't do it the people don't get the money. And then each year, at each congressional session, they have to go back for the next installment of the money. But each session of Congress is going to decide whether they are going to relate to that or not. The corporations are going to have to go back each session and fight to keep the thing going. The next session of Congress can say, "We don't recognize what the last Congress did," and cut them off.

The Act is written in bureaucratese. For instance, there is a distinction between allocation and appropriation. A billion dollars has been allocated, but a billion dollars hasn't been appropriated. And that is the key: A lot of times you can allocate very easily. Appropriation means coughing up the money. They have appropriated so much for the first year, but they haven't appropriated anywhere near the billion. So the native people are now starting to find out all these things. You know, to find out that 60 per cent of their land is glaciers is kind of a blow. They are trying to get the Department of the Interior to change it, but the answer has been no.

The Strategy Is Maps

Part of the problem is that it has been a matter, mainly, of looking at maps, and saying, "Gee, a lot of land." Then when

*The explosiveness is significant as contrasted with the implosive way people had responded to manipulation and powerlessness. The land claims settlement was the light at the end of the tunnel but the reality of the settlement is closing the door, or at least providing obstacles, and that is when people explode.

they finally go around and start surveying, it's glacier. And of course the Department of the Interior knows it's glacier. There is also the problem of right angles. The claims are to be at right angles on the map. Not following a river bank or a valley or a trap line – just 90° angles. Makes no sense to anyone but the bureaucrats.

There is a cynical joke going around. They'll give everything from 25,000 to 15,000 feet to the Aleut, from 15,000 to 10,000 feet to the Athabascans, from 10,000 to 5,000 feet to the Tlingets, from 5,000 to 2,500 feet to the Eskimo, and give the whites the rest. The natives will end up with a lot of land, but it would be the tops of the mountains.

The reality is almost that absurd, and the people are finding that out more and more.

They thought they were going to be independent and have a money base, and for the first time they were going to be able to control their own lives. That door is slowly being closed.

The settlement was not really based on land usage and need but rather on population density.

The caribou hunters in the north need a far greater breadth of territory, for the same amount of population, than, say, the fishermen on the Yukon River.

Communication among the Native People Will Help

So the Skyriver process is now being used by the Northwest Alaska Native Association to unravel the land claim settlement.

First, they can find out what people think the land claim is right now, which varies from village to village. Some people don't know anything about it, some people have a fairly good knowledge of it, and the rest of them fall kind of in between. There's a lot of misinformation and rumor. So they have to get that out on the surface first, to find out just exactly at what level they have to deal with the villages. Then they will respond to the villages with videotape to strengthen and speed up the process. I think that it is a very important application of videotape. They will be using it internally between the villages.

If the villages can profoundly understand and communicate their common interests, perhaps that "divide and conquer" approach, will not have its destructive effect.

Tim Kennedy

Issues or Personalities?

Now there is the question, do we film issues or personalities? This must be related to the value systems that exist in Eskimo villages. They are quite different to the ones I was brought up with, regarding the concepts of leadership and attitudes toward competition and achievement.

As an example, I was brought up in western society, which is an achievement-oriented society. An aggressive kind of competitiveness is rewarded and thought of as a positive virtue. This is quite different from the Yupik people I work with. They are a congregative people. If someone achieves, or gets ahead of the group, unless the other people in the group feel that they are benefiting from his success, the person is ostracized as much as the loser or the under-achiever. It's essentially different.

So if I go in with the formula that the personality is important, and must be sought out, it would be a complete failure. Any individual who is on tape or who is on film representing that community is of secondary importance, even though he may be a natural leader. He or she is only important as a spokesman, articulating an issue that has been identified by the community. A consensus has been reached on the issue and, particularly if change does result from it, everyone feels that they are benefiting by the process. As an incidential factor, a small group or an individual within that community has articulated the community's views. If I did it any other way it would not work. So Skyriver is issue-oriented for that reason.

Participants in the Skyriver Project

Anchorage:
Phil Cook *(Film)*
Phil Smith *(Video)*
Clark Mishler *(Graphics)*

Emmonak:
Raymond Waska *(Regional Organizer)*

Tununak:
Andrew and Louis Chikoyak *(Film Crew)*

Tim Kennedy *(Director)*

Letter to an Indian Friend

happen not to have one anymore, or [illegible] to have one who feels his "real work" is the "real world" obviates any routine family duties. If we do not marry we are usually deprived of the pleasure of caring for and playing with children. In Indian society all adults feel responsible for all children. There are all the generations, all together, and interdependent. Nor do I feel most present-day communes offer a satisfactory alternative. While they may be an attempt at trying to live again in a human system of relationships, they have a long way to go. Where, for example, are the old people in the communes? (Old people, in white society, are not usually respected for their wisdom, but are rejected as being no longer competitive and powerful.) Also, many Indians don't care for the alternative culture's tendency to regard women as invisible "chicks" or "old ladies" that do the shit-work.

It is myth that Indians treat their women like pack horses as is the myth of Indians scalping everyone in sight. White colonizers have always castigated others for their own bad habits. (Scalping, burning at the stake, and treating women as non-persons, all existed in Europe long before 1492.)

While Southern men washed their women's feet in deference to the duties and requirements those feet fulfilled, white men have put a halo of false "purity" around their women, which is another way of dehumanizing and disenfranchising them. They "protest too much" about the holiness of motherhood and the incapability of women to do "hard work". This is another way of maintaining power. They don't worry about the "sacredness of motherhood" among the women they employ in hospital kitchens and laundries, garment factories, and as chambermaids in hotels, and in typewriter factory jobs. Instead, they remark on "women having more patience for tedious jobs". The least paid, least respected jobs in white society are those considered "women's work": they can be summed up as Serving Others or Cleaning Up After Others. This description applies to secretaries, receptionists and telephone operators, just as well as to char-women, office cleaners and housewives. Nurses and air stewardesses are not exceptions: they are just a little better paid.)

I often have found myself more comfortable with Indian people than I generally am with "my own people". Among Indian people there seems to be a lack of criticism, an acceptance of people as they really are: everyone is right, even one who holds a different point of view from one's own. If that view be genuine. After years of parents, schools, husbands, psychiatrists who spent all the time they could spare "helping" me to believe I was "wrong" in all my gut perceptions, what a sensation of relief! What a relief to sit and drink a cup of coffee with Indians, where silence doesn't inevitably produce a little remark like, "Well, we're a bright crowd today!" White people in company are like rock radio stations – they can't abide dead air. They can't sit calmly with others enjoying the company even when silent, in the quiet knowledge that whenever anyone wants to say something, others are there and will listen.

White people talk too much anyway – to cover a lack of genuine warmth and trust between them. I was brought up with an excessive use of "please", "would you mind very much . . . ", "I wonder if you could possibly . . . " preceding any request of another person. Indians say "pick that up". But it does not cut down the other person to be the recipient of such a direct command. It is not a command implying one's superiority or power over the other, but the simplest, most straightforward way of communicating a wish or need in a society where there is enough love, trust, respect and interdependence between people to make cushioning phrases unnecessary.

When children are treated as free people they are not wracked with guilt and apology for not yet being adults. They have quiet poise, self-confidence, politeness, and no need for noisy showing-off or for pestering demands for attention. Running free out of doors goes hand in hand with sitting peacefully for hours with adults, learning both from the direct experience and from the conversations of those older. Meanwhile I know, as a child, that the only decent thing to do, considering the trouble I caused others, was to Grow Up As Fast As Possible. Results: how do you tell you're really grown up, ever? In the society in which I live, housekeeping, cooking, sewing, tending children and others are worthwhile and rewarding occupations when they contribute to a society of equal human beings. I do not like them when they are extra-on-account-of-my-sex demands in a society that demeans those things. Paradoxically, at the same time this society often requires women to contribute economically, even support whole families, while being paid less than men for the same work – on the hoary assumptions that "women are always going to leave the job to marry or have children" and "every woman has someone else to support her". Yet far more women than men must single-handedly provide for dependents – children and aged parents – and this society offers no community of support, nowhere to turn.

Rolling Thunder said that being Indian is less a matter of the color of one's skin than the state of one's mind.

Your invitation beams inviting, emotional future here often looks pretty bleak.

Yet to leave would mean risking losing touch with my only child, and abandoning the "achievements" I've learned to consider as legitimizing my existence.

I continue writing in your prayerful place, and send me your prayers.

Kathleen

En tant que femmes... as women

A Société Nouvelle Project by and for Women

A recent issue of Médium Média *(the sister publication of Access) was devoted to this project, which has been progressing over the past couple of years. The following articles are translations of impressions of the project, signed collectively by the women of the group.*

"En tant que femmes": Why, How

Behind the project "En tant que femmes" we find a group of women who suddenly recognized their uneasiness as women in the employ of the NFB. Who have done a lot of thinking, have met, written. Who have defined their feminism point by point. And who finally threw themselves into a project of making films for and with women, after having extracted the necessary authorizations, one by one.

Being a Woman at the NFB

The National Film Board is like all the rest: a man's world. A masculine institution where the men make the important decisions, hold the management positions with here and there a few women scattered among the hierarchy. One day, a few women from the NFB said to themselves that after thirty years of films made by men (*There have been a few exceptions.* Ed.) it was high time that women have their turn "as women". That not only should they make films all alone, like grown-ups but that they should make those films to speak to other women about the problems that are of primary concern to them. The crazy project was born: a film program that would be directed and produced, as much as possible, by women alone, on subjects with which they would deal in their own way without trying to pass themselves off as men.

Conceived in the summer of 1970 in the heads of a few, the idea progressed slowly and, simultaneously, the group enlarged little by little. The first version of the program was presented to the NFB in March 1971, within the framework of the program "Société Nouvelle". A team was formed around the initial nucleus; the literature on feminism, on the behavior of women and the differences between the sexes, was thoroughly studied. All the Quebec groups were met, aswell as other Canadian and American groups that brought women together or took an interest in them. Grass-roots women's organizations in Quebec were visited by the women of the NFB. All this resulted in a voluminous research report in September 1971; the background data was produced, the ideological line was clearly established, and various types of film documents were proposed. Most, but not all, were kept.

The Purposes of the Enterprise

"We said to ourselves, rather than attack women in our films, we are going to find out why they behave as they do. And rather than attempt once more to explain ourselves to others, we are going to try to find out who we are, who women are, what the needs of women are, by discussing among ourselves, as honestly as possible, without worrying about what others think. As the American blacks did when, after having long written books to explain blacks to whites, they produced a much deeper and more honest literature by beginning to write for blacks. Thus, of course, we opted for a particular bias, but it was the only way to get rid of a much more blinding purpose: the purpose of conformity to the usual. Explaining oneself is always in reference to someone else; and we wanted to move away from terms of reference established by others." (Extract from research report.)

We were not concerned with drawing up a balance sheet of the condition of the Quebec women nor of making informed documentaries on the subject. The women engaged in the "En tant que femmes" production team have this in common – that they wish to make personal films, committing themselves totally. These films, they hope, will be useful for women, will be distributed widely among the feminine groups, will provoke reflection. They are convinced that it is precisely through making very personal films, products of their own feminist evolution, that they will most readily reach other women.

Three objectives were defined and they constitute, in fact, the essential aspects of any developing political consciousness. Above all, the isolation of women must be shattered to give them a sense of solidarity; women must not be afraid to identify themselves first of all as women, seeing themselves as part of a group whose members have the same characteristics as themselves: to stop seeing other women as competitors but, rather, to see in them friends and allies. This process must involve deep inward reflection, and that is the second objective: awareness must go hand-in-hand with a re-appraisal of oneself, a step which combines a redefinition of self in terms of one's own interests alone (no longer just in terms of man, children, etc.) with a critical examination of one's way of living and acceptance of one's identity.

Last goal: developing among women a social awareness. Women, as they redefine themselves, have a role to play in society. One day, it will be necessary to perceive that it is all of society that must be rebuilt and that, basically, men as well as women are persecuted by this society that categorizes everything in terms of biological differences, which are less and less the deciding factor. It is the whole of human relations which must be re-defined and women, collectively, have a forceful role to play in this major revision. They must become aware of this social and political importance which is conferred on them by history.

Their Feminism: What It Is, What It Is Not

The research report (September 1971) starts with these words: "Enough background and facts have been brought to light and widely distributed during the past decade that we dare to believe no one any longer denies the existence of discrimination against women. This discrimination is there, it exists as obviously as snow in a Quebec winter and it is not by reforms – like the abolition of abortion laws or the end of employment discrimination – that we will see the last of it. This sexism must be pulled out by the roots, one by one, and in this sense it is really a revolutionary change which is needed. We are now increasingly able to analyse this phenomenon. At the origin we find biological differences between women and men: the man sows the seed and the woman bears the child. Out of these differences, constraining stereotypes were built; roles were divided in a way that was as dehumanizing for men as for women, with the distinction that this distribution of roles gave men the power. Personality traits which are mere cultural acquisitions – such as feminine gentleness and masculine toughness – are presented as natural and desirable. Because women have always been confined to the domestic and child-rearing world (or to that of good works and devotion), they find themselves without feminine models. No one speaks about the women who made their mark in history other than as mothers, teachers or nurses.

"In the rehabilitation of delinquent boys, one of the most common and effective therapies is that of emulation ("make a man of yourself"). In the case of delinquent girls, however, a parallel therapy based on "becoming a woman" has proved totally ineffective." (Extract from research report.)

Why be surprised then that the supreme achievement for a woman is to successfully make a place for herself in a man's world? Must she for this reason deny that she belongs to the feminine collectivity as a group sharing similar interests?

"The security and confidence born of the fellowship mentioned in our first objective generate a capacity to take charge of one's own life, to become responsible for it. In spite of the apparent and superficial advantages that dependence gives her, a woman must finally accept the challenge of her own independence if she wants to stop living by proxy and in an artificial world." (Research report.)

The difficulty that women experience in becoming totally independent can be connected with three important stages in their lives. First of all, early childhood when the psychological difference is instilled in a child by education and socializing: sex is biological, but gender is cultural. Then the period of secondary studies and career choice, when it is difficult to ignore social and cultural imperatives, and girls opt for careers as "feminine" as secretary and nurse, conforming to the stereotypes.

Finally, the last stage, that of motherhood, too often used to compensate for a vacuum or to conform to the norm. Motherhood is happy only if it is truly free; and to arrive at that, it is necessary to have at one's disposal not only all the contraceptive possibilities but also freedom from such limiting stereotypes as "in order to be a real woman, it is necessary to have known motherhood." Motherhood must "be integrated into a recognized and accepted identity and be one definite stage in taking charge of one's own life." We must rethink the whole concept of motherhood – fatherhood too, long treated as secondary, due to the glorification of the first.

Because women are excluded from all power structures and because they share the same problems and the same alienation, they must get together and build a collective enterprise that is authentically human, whose cornerstone is freedom of choice. It is not a question of replacing one power with another. It is a question only of permitting men and women together to experience liberated relationships, free from the stereotypes and patterns of behavior inherent in an authoritarian society.

Women Together

"There is this idea we get of women working together. Several people, even little girls, said: It is going to be a pretty mess, there will be quarrelling, they will leave the office with fistfuls of hair... This was a caricature. Certainly there were conflicts, very real ones, but they were resolved, as we wanted above all not to compromise the precious solidarity we had just acquired and in which we had found our strength.

"We were all women who had had to fight in a world of men and had, each one, found her personal solution. Hence the reticence at the beginning. Together we set about discovering a solidarity among women, which we thought was scarcely possible. The first day I wrote a sentence on the blackboard which others found foolish, but it meant: 'I am coming back from the man's world.' There are moments of skepticism when one wonders: Are we tilting at windmills? Our friendship is still young. It is not easy to move straight away from that to finding common cause, to mutual support. I think that we have succeeded in something quite rare. We had thought, each of us, that we were all alone. Through lighthearted exchanges, we found that all had shared very similar experiences. It was a discovery. Little by little we came to believe in the project and believe in ourselves. It was a powerful experience."

Story of a Feminist Project

Authority to undertake the project was obtained relatively easily. The Bird Commission on the Status of Women, which had just made public its brief and its recommendations, gave a certain legitimacy to the project. But it was not taken especially seriously; on the whole it was seen as somewhat trivial, not at all political. Certainly, it drew a few good jokes, interesting specimens of masculine humor (e.g., "Try at least to hire beautiful girls"). Those who took the project seriously, and there were not many, worried about the feminist intentions of the project. The team had chosen to put its cards on the table from the very beginning. They, on the other hand, have found it would be preferable to have the spirit of the project that of the Bird Commission, that is, something very objective, detached, free of any aggressiveness and personal implications.

The exchange of sarcastic remarks and bitter replies brought with it a climate of hostility between the women of the team and the men of the Board. The atmosphere was tense. But, little by little, the women of the team, thanks to working together, to their collective evolution, changed a lot; they acquired a good measure of self-confidence and security; they were beginning to be capable of responding coldly to male attacks. Hostility gave way to good-natured kidding.

Out of this atmosphere appeared a new phenomenon of discrimination against women. From being sarcastic, the men became protectors; paternalistic suggestions became common. One person proposed that each member of the team be paired with a masculine adviser with more experience, another reflected on one member's competence by generously offering his services and advice. Eventually, however, the men understood that the women on the project really wanted to do it alone, except in very specific fields where the discrimination of the NFB had prevented the development of female competence (e.g., the camera).

For several months it has been working; the women plan the films and produce them themselves with the co-operation of a few carefully chosen men sensitized to the problems of women. Where will it lead? We don't know yet. Certainly, traditional NFB criteria of quality will be adhered to. Film Board men will pass the supreme test when they see the films: their response will tell whether or not they accept that the women have made films to speak to other women in women's terms.

An Approach to Film and Research

There are many ways of doing research – through books and interviews for example. But for the "En tant que femmes" team who wanted their films to translate the *reality* of Quebec women, the best approach seemed to be to go to see these women – to bring them out of the kitchen, the nursery, and especially out of solitude.

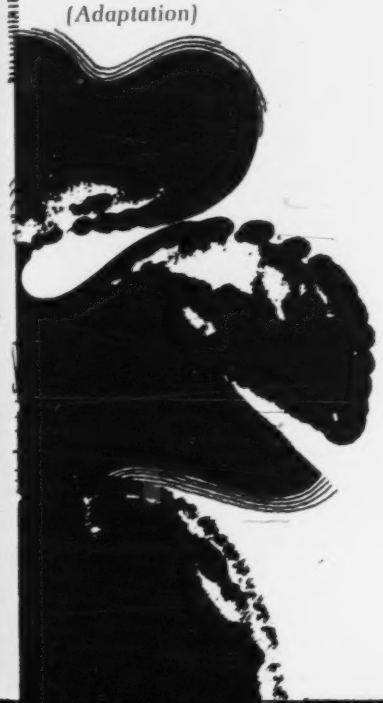
Groups of women were formed from different milieux and different circumstances – and animators helped them become deeply involved in discussion. There was no question of arriving at ready-made conclusions or pushing them artificially into the pattern through which the production group had evolved. Each group developed its own rhythm, defined its own concerns.

All the discussions were taped and were the first research source of the production team. It helped them put a finger on the *big problems* as others experienced them – to verify their own hunches, in a way. There were six groups in all – women from 60 to 84 in one group, teenagers in another, wives and mothers, single women with children, separated and divorced women, career women succeeding in a man's world.

The team perceived that, for most women, the problems were similar and, even if these problems were experienced very differently, an identical disquiet united them.

When you ask dominated individuals to identify themselves as a group, not dominated by having similar problems and experiences, it's a bit subversive from the outset – but it's also extremely liberating!

(Adaptation)



Women at NFB

Preliminary Report on a Questionnaire

Excerpts from a preliminary report on the questionnaire were published in Médium Média; *here is a fuller version. Kathleen Shannon's "film" has become 12 short films, some of which are in advanced stages of editing. Women's groups will be able to select from the completed films, those best suited to their needs.*

While researching a film about "Problems of Working Mothers", I found that existing surveys didn't provide answers to a number of my questions, so I hit on the idea of doing my own. Many nights and weekends later, I realized why people are hired on a full-time basis for such undertakings.

On the premise that the Federal Government, while being the largest employer of women in Canada, is also not the worst, and that the NFB is not the worst department for which to work, sending a questionnaire to all the women working for NFB in Montreal and Ottawa would, I felt provide a sampling of the opinions and attitudes of what must be a relatively well-done-by group of workin, women. Besides getting statistics, I hoped to be able to make correlations with lifestyles, possibly find people to interview in the film, improve communication within this organization (while we munificently go out across the country with audio-visual equipment to improve communication within communities, our own community is sadly lacking in this respect), and maybe do a little consciousness-raising on the side.

An anonymity factor was built in: the questionnaire itself was not to be signed, but a separate page was included on which people were invited to send back their names in a separate envelope if they wished to know the results or help to compile those results, or be involved in the making of the film.

Among other things, the questionnaire "found" a woman to interview who has a viable marriage and nuclear family – something I'd almost despaired of achieving while at the same time not wanting to make a film that could be dismissed as anti-marriage propaganda.

One of the basic questions was whether people would mind if the compiled results were released, for example, to the Department of Labour (which had expressed some interest) or to our own Personnel department (which had expressed none). I wouldn't be writing this but for the overwhelming 89 per cent that had no objection. Four per cent didn't answer the question.

Asked whether we should send the results to all NFB staff and management or just to the women who requested them, just under 18 per cent said the latter, 3 per cent specified *all* the women at NFB, and while my attitude is with the 3 per cent or the 18 per cent, I'm outnumbered: 70 per cent said to everybody, with many additional remarks. Singled out were "management", "male management", "especially men so they'll be aware that women don't only think about typewriters all day", "it's time we stopped hiding our opinions", "most may ridicule us but we can't condone ignorance and prejudice". Four per cent felt the results should not be given out, but some of these appeared to fear that individual results might be involved.

While I was disappointed at the percentage of copies that were completed and returned – about 22 per cent – and worried that it didn't represent so much a cross-section as a sample of dedicated questionnaire-answerers, I've been told that this is considered a high response in surveys of this type. It's my fault, too, as I made it too long (75 questions) and many people just gave up. The immediate returns were from women under 26 and over 43. Besides the established fact that there are fewer women in the work force between the ages of 25 and 34, those years are even more under-represented in the returns of the questionnaire – working mothers with small children don't have time to answer 75 questions. One woman, with only one child, told me she spent all her lunch hours for two weeks filling it out. When I remember my years with a small child at home, working a minimum of 100 hours a week between NFB and family, I realize how much I imposed on others. I seldom had time to read a newspaper – let alone wrestle with 75 (often complicated) questions.

Among the people who responded, "married" and "single" were exactly the same number – slightly over 32 per cent each. The next largest group were "separated" – 16 per cent, followed by "living with a man but deliberately not married" – more than 13 per cent. Four per cent were divorced; there were no responses from people "widowed" or "deserted"; 1½ per cent are in "another situation".

The reasons why women work break down as follows:

"for financial reasons" – 76 per cent yes; 5 per cent no.

"as a profession or career" – 47 per cent yes; 14 per cent no.

"like to work" – 62 per cent yes; 7 per cent no.

"bored to stay at home every day" – 50 per cent yes; 17 per cent no.

"need the company of other adults during the day" – 50 per cent yes; 10 per cent no.

"hate housework" – an astonishing 45½ per cent admitted yes; 20 per cent no.

Twenty-three per cent of the total responses feel they are better mothers if they do not spend all of their time with their children; 5 per cent disagree.

While most people marked a number of factors, some singled out only one – that being in most cases the first, occasionally the second. Those were the only two singled out individually. The percentages don't add up to 100 as I've left out those without any response.

The large number who didn't answer this question would be due to the relatively small percentage of responses from mothers of young children.

Forty-five per cent of the returns were from mothers, but the children involved are only 9 under 6 years, 31 from 6 to 14, and 30 over 14 (a number of these grown up and on their own). Out of these, 21 people would use a day care center "at or near NFB", 7 a day care center in their community, 22 a lunch program for school-aged children, 23 an after-school program, and 26 an emergency homemaker's service for occasions when children are sick or on holiday from school. The disparity between the large number who would use a day care center and the small number of mothers of children of an age to benefit is explained by the fact that many people answered "I would have", or "I would". The latter includes both young married women with no children yet, and single women who would like to adopt a child but can't because of the present problems of child care. Of course it does *not* reflect the demand of the young mothers who didn't manage to answer the survey, nor the fathers who expressed interest in a day care center at NFB when there was a campaign a few years ago to start one. (All that was needed was space, of which there was plenty at the time, but the management of the day just said "no", reflecting what seems to be a standard bureaucratic fear of children running about the halls – the last wish of the parents themselves.) From the replies to "are you satisfied with the arrangements you have to care for your children?" one-third said *no*. Many of the other two-thirds, while including a couple with adequate day-care centers and a few with satisfactory baby-sitters (though the cost

was mentioned), have older children no longer needing care. (A few years ago, I would also have favored day care at work rather than in the community, but since my research on the subject, I now see the validity of day care being a service in the community integrated with the other programs mentioned and maybe with the school system.)

Concerning NFB specifically, one-quarter of the women who replied don't like their present jobs, one-fifth feel they are not in a responsible job; one-third would like more responsibility.

While I'd wanted to ask what kind of work people are doing, I refrained because in the case of production or management, it would have revealed identities – there are so few women in those areas.

Two-thirds of NFB women feel they should be paid more. No one feels she is paid more than a man doing an equivalent job; 41 per cent feel they are paid the same as a man doing the same job; 26 per cent said less and 32 per cent said there is no basis for comparison – with a number of comments that there aren't any male secretaries or receptionists. One per cent didn't answer this question.

It would need a computer to figure the median salary: they were reported as gross per year, net per week, freelance by day. While there are a few healthy ones, there are many I'd hate to have to try to live on.

Exactly half of the people answering have had difficulties getting a job or promotion they wanted because they are women; because they have children: 11 per cent yes, 27 per cent no, and many non-answers. One woman has told me that NFB turned her down because she had young children – but later did hire her.

Thirty-eight per cent feel they have suffered prejudice or discrimination *at NFB* because they are women; 26 per cent didn't answer. Asked the same in terms of "elsewhere" 34 per cent said yes, 29 per cent didn't answer.

Would it be a good idea to have a women's production unit (as we have French, English, and Native production units)? 48 per cent said yes; 32 per cent no, 12 per cent didn't answer, and 8 per cent questioned the question.

The answers to "do you feel there are some jobs that you are not so capable of as men" ranged from sex-stereotyped answers like "surgeon" to the role-free "yes – male model". The majority were "no" except for "heavy physical labor".

Even the minority of women who do not feel *themselves* to be judged this way, feel that "woman in general" are judged by "appearance", "clothes", "sex appeal", "charm", etc. Most would prefer to be judged according to ability, responsibility and other "worthwhile" and valuable human traits.

I asked if one's attitude to life, work, relationships had changed particularly in the past year. Many answered "yes" but, fool that I was, I hadn't asked "how" nor left space to invite a detailed answer, so only a few people enlarged on the subject.

A majority think that maternity leave should be provided with pay. Most people did not know that accumulated sick leave can *not* be used for that purpose; while a majority felt it should be, a few pointed out that having a baby is not "being sick" and that one should be able to keep one's sick leave *for* being sick.

One set of questions, about needed changes in legislation, I have not yet analyzed; I haven't yet figured out how to do so. The number of thoughtful and innovative and responsible answers coming in made it very difficult for me to fill out that section myself, because I kept reading ideas that hadn't occurred to me. But one striking thing is that, almost unanimously, even women who would not themselves consider abortion felt that it should be a personal choice. It seems clear that women aren't nearly so determined to impose their personal attitudes on everyone else as are our legislators.

Asked if they had any idea of what the average salary is of a working woman in Canada at present, 39 per cent said they have no idea. Three per cent said "yes" but didn't say what it was. Guesses ranged from "at least $2860" to "6 to $7000".

Asked how much a woman with small children must earn in order to break even when she does not have an employed husband, many people pointed out rightly that it depended on further information –

how many children, with or without a dependent husband, etc. etc. The guesses ranged from $5,200 to $16,000. And there were a few terse answers like "the same as a man's salary".

According to the latest figures from DBS, the average income of working women, either single or the heads of families, was $4289 in 1971 Women *with husbands* are *not* included in this average, but if they were, the figure would certainly be lower; another point is that many female heads of families are on welfare, as they are unable to find jobs that pay enough to support children and cover child care costs. The average income of men, either single or "heads of families" was $9334 for the same year (some of the discrepancy is due to the fact that the salary of the wife is included in this "family unit" figure – an interesting fact in itself).

A couple of men had asked me at the beginning how I could be sure that people would answer honestly. Besides the anonymity that was assured, I couldn't imagine that anyone would go through 75 questions making up answers. There is one returned copy that has made me wonder whether it is a put-on, but who on earth would go to all that trouble? Besides, a number of its answers ring true...

Although I haven't yet made the correlations to be certain, my impression is that both the ~~most~~ conservative ("I just want to get married and have babies") and most radical (militant feminist) answers are from French-speaking women. Most of the very conservative orientations are from very young women, and the state of young English-speaking women's bilingualism being what it is, probably most of the young women employed here are French. So the conservativeness is a matter of age rather than cultural background. But I do see a relationship betwen strong feminism and a Quebec background.
Québécoises are more politicized, it seems to me, than their Anglo sisters, and once politicized in one area, more quickly in another... black women have been among the earliest and strongest feminists...

Was the questionnaire a worthwhile undertaking? 66 per cent replied yes, either with no qualification or with stronger comments ("absolutely", "prise de conscience", "makes one more aware"). Fifteen per cent said yes, with qualifications like "if it makes people more aware", "if it's responsibly interpreted". There were some justified criticisms – length, unclarity of some questions, the limitedness of the sampling. Three per cent felt it was not worthwhile – I must say I admire them for carrying on right to the bitter end! But a much larger number gratuitously added that they had enjoyed filling it in.

I'm a little regretful about that anonymity factor – there are quite a few people who answered that I'd like to meet (of course, maybe I know them already).

Kathleen Shannon
Challenge for Change

When Women Work Together

A New and Creative Fellowship

When they began to work together, the members of the "En tant que femmes" team did not know they were undertaking an experiment that would change them profoundly. Individually, they were relatively aware; they had identified most of the problems of women. They thought that they would deepen this awareness within the framework of a production on the condition of women. They had all realized that the fact of working with women was in the last analysis more significant than the production itself. And so they discovered new friendship and a new fellowship, whereas before, some of them had never even had women friends.

We believe that we are alone with our experiences, our griefs; we are reluctant to share them; we say to ourselves that they could interest no one, that it would be unhealthy, infantile, and so on. . . And then we find ourselves in a group of persons who are exactly like us; it's just a suspicion at first, and we look at one another with vague mistrust. For a while, the discussion remains at the level of mundane or professional concerns. Then, suddenly, there is an opening – one of us is speaking a little, then another. Then we're all involved; there is no longer a group of individuals gathered together in one room, but a collectivity of persons sharing anguish, struggles, aspirations.

In the light of this friendship, this open affection of which they were not ashamed, the members of the "En tant que femmes" team not only deepened their feminist thinking but found their personal development marked with a sign of this new solidarity. It was a revelation for all of them. For it is not easy to establish friendships with other women. When we have for a long time more or less consciously wished to be a man; when, in order to succeed in a trade, we have buried all our femininity; when we are not really proud of being a woman – then we haven't the least desire to be part of a group of women. We want to forget we are women. All other women always seem to us to be, to some extent, rivals – rivals who attract male glances or who, on the other hand, "make it" professionally and thus steal the light from other women's successes. There are a great many barriers to cross before knowing what feminine fellowship can be. But when we do manage to cross them, it is all the more thrilling. We realize what we were missing before. We feel humanized; we notice changes in our behavior. Women are often troubled when they come up against the solidarity of male friendships, as they are almost always deprived of similar experiences. Obviously, this is not normal. But we had learned to believe that it was a question of feminine "personality". Come on now...

All on the Same Foot

The women on the "En tant que femmes" team all had, in various capacities, experience with film. They had all known the fever of shooting and the fleeting solidarity of a production team. They couldn't help noticing the different nature of their experience with "En tant que femmes": traditional lines of direction, the usual tendency to "grade" jobs, became blurred. Hardly a surprise, because all the women involved in the work – script writers, producers, editors – had committed themselves personally, as women more than as workers; and on discovering little by little this new fellowship which bound them all together, they defined themselves more and more as women. Categories were dropped; now there were simply women – with various capabilities, of course – but women who were all on the same footing at the level of feminist research. Certain members of the team state that they have never experienced work as authentically that of colleagues; work which is done *with* others and not *for* others. This "egalitarianism" happened automatically but, in fact, it is a characteristic found in all feminist groups. And one would have to be blind not to see a deep meaning in this. Wherever they go, wherever they work, women find themselves unhappily integrated into organizations directed by men; they pitifully try to find a place in a hierarchy where they are handicapped from the outset. Often they will find themselves subordinated to men whose authority is rooted less in competence than in gender: in the family, at work, and... The problem is all the more acute in a society where the notions of leadership, authority, firm direction, etc., are highly valued. Because women are systematically kept apart from the lines of authority and power, it is very understandable that they, not always consciously, come to repudiate any form of authoritarianism and to give enormous value to the principles of direct democracy, equal participation, "colleagueship". If all feminist groups work in a very democratic way, some of them come close to anarchy in their concern for equality.

It was not through theoretical reflection that the "En tant que femmes" team adopted democratic methods of operation, respecting the capabilities of each one. It was an instinctive, spontaneous step whose meaning they did not grasp until they were deeply involved in the experience. And it is one example among many which tend to show that the new society, the society of sexual revolution, risks being established on a much more human and profoundly egalitarian basis! When one human being out of two is a little less equal, as is still the case, great professions of faith in democracy and equality sound a little hollow.

About the Films

Garderies is less a study of day care for children than it is a reflection on the child and the commitment of adults to him. Editing is being completed.

Les filles du roy is a search for the identity of the Quebec woman, in the guise of a love letter. Shooting has been completed.

A Reflection on Marriage – Four women make different choices – conscious choices, yet not choices because "it was the only thing to do". Being edited.

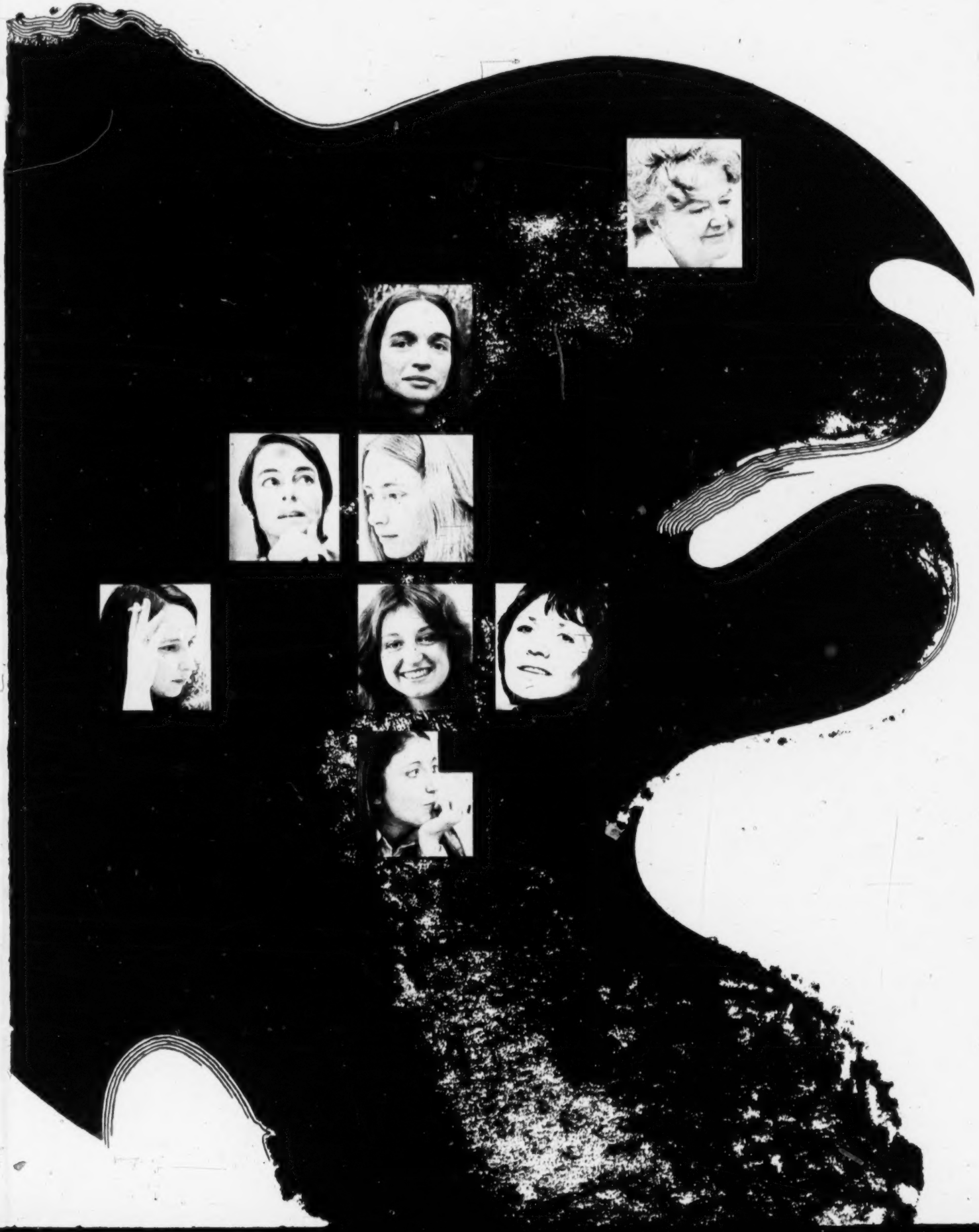
Souris, tu m'inquiètes – The daily life of a Quebec woman expressed in a film combining drama and segments of non-fiction. Final print stage.

Les jeunes filles – Will present a multiple portrait of the young woman of today – the real woman behind the image of beauty contests, fashion and advertising. Being scripted. To be approved for production.

A sixth film is to be decided. All are one-hour films scheduled for broadcast on the CBC French network, with the hope that they will be seen by women, men, young people as part of a dialogue. "Our ultimate preoccupation is much more social than feminist."

Women Who Worked on the Production of the Program

Jeanne Boucher
Susan Gibbard
Françoise Berd
Madeleine Savoie
Michèle Saumier
Thérèse Lindsay
Aimée Danis
Mireille Dansereau
Janine Careau
Hélène Girard
Francine Saia
Anne Claire Poirier
Susan Gabory
Nicole Chamson
Jeanne Lapointe
Maria Nicoloff
Marthe Blackburn
Clorinda Warny
Claire Boyer
Mona Josée Gagnon
Francine Desbiens
Suzanne Gervais
Vivianne Elnécavé
Francine Gagné
Marthe de la Chevrotière
Andrée Thibault
Adèle Lauzon
Monique Larocque



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VEUILLEZ M'ENVOYER _____ COPIES DE CETTE CARTE POUR DISTRIBUTION

Video Exchange Directory has a head start on keeping track of users of half-inch video. Let's make theirs the definitive list. Fill out the following or get some of their cards, from which this is reproduced.

Send to 358 Powell Street, Vancouver 4, B.C. The third directory will be published in the Fall.

They have also started a community lending library of non-commercial video. They'll be lending a cassette player and monitor to local action groups and community organizations so they can show tapes of their choice in store fronts, meeting rooms, etc. Steal this idea.

Video in Community Development arrived just as we were going to press. There's a programmed text with spaces for your own notes and a mighty file of reference articles from sources like *Radical Software, Access*, Alternate Media Centre. And more. It was put together by people at the Institute for Research in Art and Technology, and published by Ovum Ltd., London. £4.25

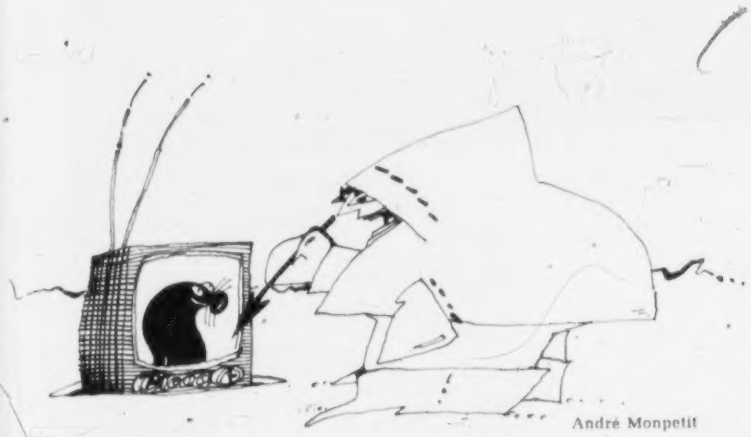
Some prairie people are taking the initiative of putting together a Prairie Section for the Fall or Winter issue of Access. It will present their perspective of prairie priorities and the evolving role of communications technology (from film to mobile libraries). The coordinating address for the moment is c/o Roy Wagner, Extension Division, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon (306-343-5669). If you're a prairie person with something you'd like to say – or if you'd just like to help – drop them a line quickly.

Memo from Turner has two publications of interest:

Terminal No. 1
A single article taking a hard look at the next two decades with alternative directions. Free to individuals and citizens' groups when the reprint comes in.

Misgivings
Fall/Winter '72 – a guide to funding sources for innovative ideas. Write, tell them who you are and ask the price. It's not sure yet.

Address: Memo from Turner, 5 Charles Street West, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 1R4



André Monpetit

An improved method for editing half-inch video for cleaner cuts is described in Technical Bulletin No. 10 of the NFB, available free by writing to the Technical and Production Services Branch, National Film Board of Canada, P.O. Box 6100, Montreal 101, Quebec. This is the method conceived by Robert Forget of Vidéographe (a project initiated by Société Nouvelle) and developed by NFB technicians. Bulletin No. 10 includes plans for the circuit. Robert believes it can be built at reasonable cost by anyone with a basic understanding of electronics.

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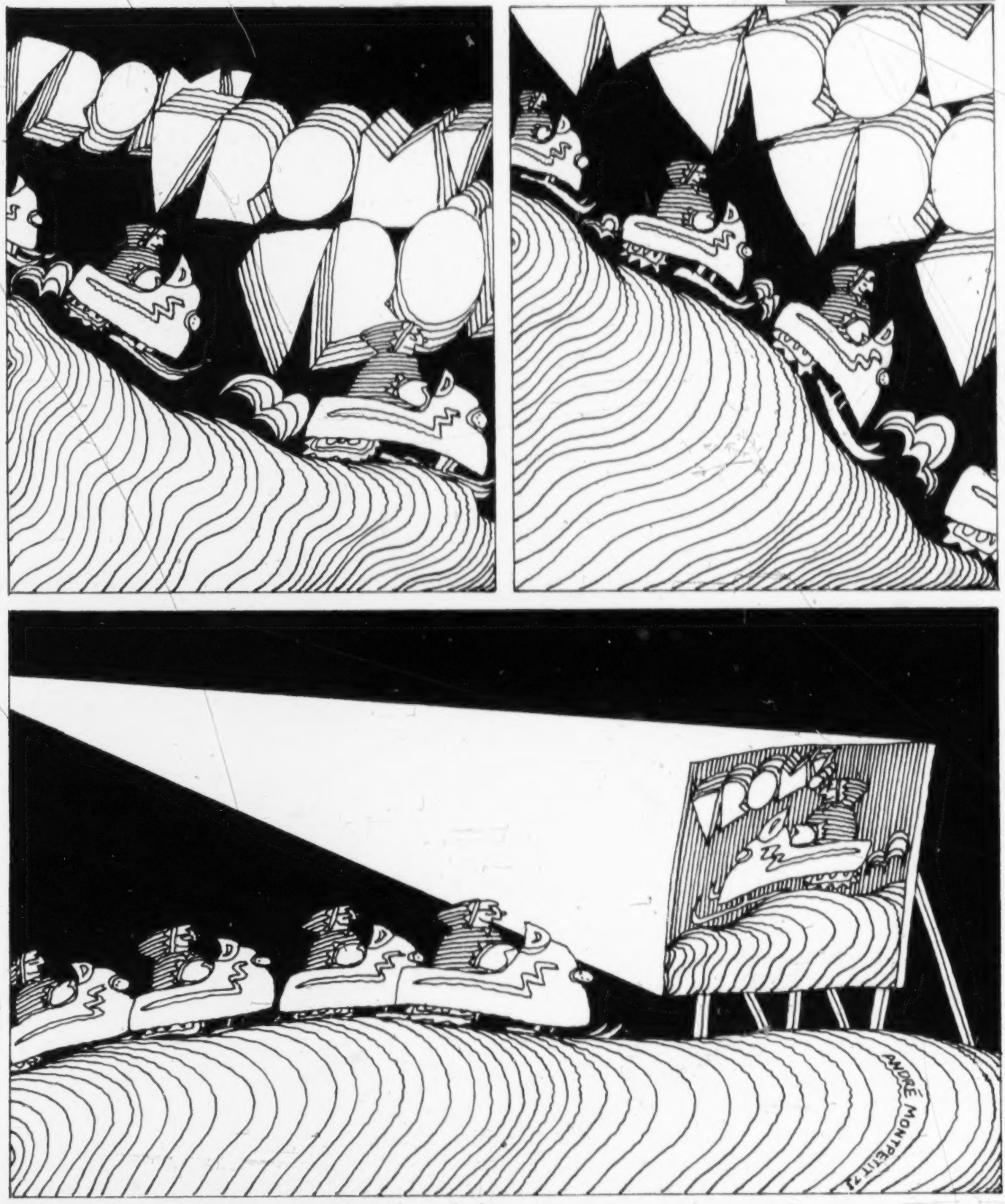

Challenge for Change, NFB, P.O. Box 6100, Montreal, 101, Quebec